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ABSTRACT

To assist the learner of English as a second language in dealing with the search for housing, a series of dialogs, comprehension questions, readings, and points of discussion are presented. The text is illustrated with sample forms and rental ads. (JB)

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STUDENT LESSON #6

FINDING A PLACE TO LIVE

English for Living

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The University of the State of New York
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OBJECTIVES

When you finish this module you will be able to:

1. Read the rental ads in the newspaper.
2. Look for a place to live that is right for you.
3. Ask questions about a lease before you sign a lease.
4. Understand some important words used on a lease.

SITUATION SETTER

When your family needs to find a place to live, there are four things you must think about: Do you want to rent an apartment or buy a house? Where do you want to live? How much can you pay? How many bedrooms do you need?

You can find ads for places to live in the classified section of your local newspaper. Usually it is in the last few pages of the newspaper, but in a larger paper, such as the Sunday paper, it may be a separate section. Ads for places to live are put in the newspaper by the owner of the house or apartment, or by a real estate agency. Each ad has a telephone number, so you can call for more information.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What things do you have to think about when you need to find a place to live?
2. Where can you find out about places to live?
3. What is the section of newspaper called where you can find ads for places to live?
4. Who puts ads in the newspapers?
5. How can you find out more about an apartment or house?

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How did your family find the house or apartment where you live now?
2. Does your family want to move? Where would your family like to move?

READING: RENTAL ADS

In order to understand the rental ads you should understand the abbreviations used. Here are some common abbreviations:

BR/bdrm—bedroom	appl—appliances
DR—dining room	w/w cpt—wall-to-wall carpeting
LR—livingroom	util—utilities
kit—kitchen	H—heat
bath—bathroom	HW—hot water
lg—large	ref req—references required
furn—furnished	avail—available
unfurn—unfurnished	incl—included

You should also know these words:

Lease–a written, legal agreement between the tenant and the owner of the apartment.

Security deposit–extra money that you give to the landlord. If there is no damage to the apartment, he or she returns the security deposit when you move out.

Utilities–electricity, heat

References–information from previous landlords or other persons saying you are a good person to have as a tenant.

Immediately available–this means you can move into the apartment right away

No pets or children–you cannot rent this apartment if you have children or a cat or dog.

Studio/efficiency–a one-room apartment

$180—the price shown in the ad is the monthly rent.

Here is an ad from today's newspaper. Read it and answer the questions that follow.

> $180. Madison Ave. 2BR
> LR, kit, bath, furn.
> util. incl., lease.
> Apex Realty 489-0876

1. How many bedrooms are there?
2. What other rooms are there?
3. How much is the rent each month?
4. Are utilities included in that price?
5. What street is the apartment on?
6. Do you think this ad is from a real estate agency or the owner?
7. Will you get a lease?
8. If you are interested in this apartment how can you find out more about it? What questions would you ask?

RENTAL ADS: DISCUSSION

Look at the ads below. Which place is best for your family? Why? (Think about price, size of apartment, and whether or not it's furnished.)

> $150. Central Ave. Studio
> all util.incl.,furn,
> immed.avail. call
> evening 459-6382

> $195.Park Dr. on bus route
> 2BR,furn,util.not incl.
> no pets, lease 869-6872

> $220.Allen Dr. new 2BR,lg.
> kit.,LR,bath.w/w.cpt.,new
> appl.,unfurn,avail.Sept 1
> 382-6079

> $230.Pine Str. Modern 3BR,
> LR, kit,bath,DR,garage,
> no util., 2yr.lease
> 432-9212

> $280.Spruce St.,3BR house,
> LR,DR,playroom,lg.yard,
> garage,unfurn.,ref.req.
> 876-3921

BACKGROUND TO THE DIALOG

The Lopez family is looking for an apartment. Mr. Lopez looked in the rental ads in today's newspaper. He found an ad for an apartment. It has exactly what they are looking for. He is calling to find out more about it.

DIALOG

Voice: Hello?
Mr. Lopez: Hello. I'm calling about your ad in today's paper. Is the apartment still available?
Voice: Yes, it is.
Mr. Lopez: Can I come and see it tonight at 7:00?
Voice: Yes, you can.
Mr. Lopez: What's the address?
Voice: 640 Washington Avenue.
Mr. Lopez: How do I get there from Colonie?
Voice: Take Central Avenue toward Albany. Turn right on Colvin, and then left on Washington Avenue.
Mr. Lopez: Thank you very much. I'll see you at 7:00.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What is Mr. Lopez calling about?
2. Where did he find the telephone number?
3. Has the apartment been rented yet?
4. Is Mr. Lopez going to see the apartment? When?

MICROCONVERSATIONS: Practice these conversations with another student.
You may want to ask someone questions about the apartment or house over the telephone.

MICROCONVERSATION 1

Student A: Is there a garage?
yard?
dining room?
washer and dryer?

Student B: Yes, there is.
No, there isn't.

MICROCONVERSATION 2

Student A: Is it on the first floor?
the second floor?
a busy street?
a quiet street?

Student B: Yes, it is.
No, it isn't.

MICROCONVERSATION 3

Student A: Does the apartment have oil heat?
gas heat?
a yard?
wall-to-wall carpeting?
hot water?
a washer and dryer?
a garage?

Student B: Yes, it does.
No, it doesn't.

LEASES

DIALOG

Mr. Lopez and his family came to see the apartment and they really like it. But, before they make their decision, Mr. Lopez must ask the landlord a few important questions.

Mr. Lopez: Do you require a lease?
Landlord: Yes. There's a one-year lease.
Mr. Lopez: Do you require a security deposit?
Landlord: Yes. One month's rent.
Mr. Lopez: Do you allow children?
Landlord: Yes, I do.
Mr. Lopez: What about pets?
Landlord: No, I don't allow pets.

MICROCONVERSATIONS: Practice these conversations with another student.

MICROCONVERSATION 1

There are some other important questions you may wish to ask before signing a lease. If utilities are not included in the rent, it is a good idea to ask the owner how much the gas and electric bills are per month.

Student A: How much is the electric bill?
gas bill?
water bill?
oil bill?

Student B: It's about $30 a month.
$45 a month.
$10 a month.
$35 a month.

MICROCONVERSATION 2

Schools, bus service, stores, and parks are other things you might want to ask about before you decide to rent an apartment or buy a house.

Student A: Is there a school nearby?
shopping center nearby?
bus stop nearby?
park nearby?
grocery store nearby?

Student B: Yes, there's one two blocks away.
on the corner.
down the street.
across the street.
on the next block.

READING: LEASES

When you rent an apartment you are often asked to sign a lease. Leases are written in legal language so they are very difficult to understand. It is important to have the help of someone who can understand a lease. (You may want to ask a lawyer for help.)

Some of the words you should know are:

landlord—the person who owns the apartment
tenant—the person who is renting the apartment
term—how long the tenant agrees to rent the apartment
premises—the apartment which is being rented
commencing—beginning.

Here is a sample lease. Look at it and answer the questions.

APARTMENT LEASE
(cover page)

Premises: 640 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York

Term: One year

Commencing: September 1, 1976

Monthly Rent $175.00

Landlord George Wilson
Tenant Fernando Lopez

Security Deposit $175.00

(to be returned provided the lease is
not broken and there are no damages)

George Wilson
Landlord

Fernando López
Tenant

[7]

APARTMENT LEASE

This Agreement, made the twentieth day of August in the year one thousand nine hundred and seventy-six between George Wilson hereinafter called the Landlord and Fernando López hereinafter called the Tenant.

That the Landlord hereby lets unto the Tenant, and the Tenant does hereby hire and take from the Landlord, all those certain rooms known as B apartment, on the 2nd floor and known as 640 Washington Avenue, Albany, New York 12203, for the term of one year to commence Sept. 1, 1976 and to end August 31, 1977; to be occupied as a private dwelling apartment by the Tenant and his family only, consisting of four persons.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the address of the apartment?
2. What is the name of the owner of the apartment?
3. What is the name of the man who is renting the apartment?
4. How long is the lease for?
5. Was a security deposit required? How much?
6. Who must sign the lease?

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What does your apartment or house look like? Describe it.
2. What's your neighborhood like?
3. Do you like your neighborhood? Why?
4. What was your home in your country like?
5. What are some differences between your home in the United States and your home in your country?